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ABSTRACT

To gain more information about the skills needed and used by teachers of students with serious emotional disturbances (SED), 19 teachers of students with SED were surveyed to determine the amount of time, level of importance, and perceived adequacy of training received on 20 teacher competencies in 6 major task areas. In addition, follow-up interviews were conducted with eight respondents to see if further information might be obtained regarding teachers' actual practices, feelings, and needs in their respective classrooms. Teacher perceptions regarding the importance of some competency areas appeared to be affected by level of teaching experience and level of education. However, while all 20 competency areas were found to be of at least moderate importance, behavior management skills were found to be significantly more important. Counseling skills were used in the classroom with great frequency, and teachers expressed concern about the need for training to handle student aggression. Conferring and consulting skills were ranked among the most important teaching competencies; however, teachers reported receiving the lowest level of training in this area. Implications for preparing SED teachers include the use of a transdisciplinary service delivery model, additional training in the use of counseling skills, and interdisciplinary course offerings at the preservice level. An interview protocol, and several statistical tables are appended. (Contains 16 references.) (Author/LL)

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Competencies and Training of Teachers of Students With Serious Emotional Disturbances

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Running Head: COMPETENCIES AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS OF STUDENTS WITH SED

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Abstract

To gain more information about the skills needed and used by teachers of students with serious emotional disturbances (SED), 19 SED teachers were surveyed. Follow-up interviews were conducted with 8 of the teachers. Teacher perceptions regarding the importance of some competency areas appeared to be affected by level of teaching experience and level of education. However, while all 20 competency areas were found to be of at least moderate importance, behavior management skills were significantly more important. Counseling skills were used in the classroom with great frequency, and teachers expressed concern about the need for training to handle student aggression. Conferring and consulting skills were ranked among the most important teaching competencies, however, teachers reported receiving the lowest level of training in this area. Implications for preparing SED teachers are discussed, including the use of a transdisciplinary service delivery model, additional training in the use of counseling skills, and interdisciplinary course offerings at the preservice level.

Competencies and Training of Teachers of Students

With Serious Emotional Disturbances

The skills and competencies required by teachers of students with severe emotion[illegible]d behavioral disorders (SED/BD) have been the focus of a great deal of research (Bullock, Dykes, & Kelly, 1974; Bullock & Whelan, 1971; Feinberg & Wood, 1978; Hewett, 1967; Mackie, Kvaraceus, & Williams, 1957; Rabinow, 1960). In a review of the literature, Zabel (1988) stated that "despite the evolution of perceptions of important competencies for teachers of behaviorally disordered students, there has actually been a good deal of agreement" (p. 189), with behavior management skills consistently emerging as a critical competency for SED/BD teachers. A separate analysis of competency-related research by Polsgrove and Reith (1979) indicated that four major skill areas were crucial for SED/BD teachers: 1) establishing a structured, consistent, yet flexible classroom environment; 2) working with other professionals; 3) effectively managing student behavior; and 4) having objectivity, warmth, tolerance, and emotional stability. Cullinan, Epstein, and Schultz (1986) reported that professionals working with adolescents with serious emotional disturbances had general consensus about the significance of teaching competencies in eight general areas, with behavior

management skills and professional/personal characteristics of SED/BD teachers (i.e., patience, flexibility) accorded the highest rating. Similarly, the results of a study by Joyce and Wienke (1989) showed agreement among teachers and teacher educators regarding skill competencies in six areas: behavior management, instruction, service delivery, consultation, knowledge, and instructional support. While all competencies were rated as noteworthy, those items in behavior management were rated as slightly more consequential than the other competencies (Joyce & Wienke, 1989). More recently, Gable, Hendrickson, Young, and Shokoohi-Yekta (1992) indicated that SED/BD teachers rated behavior management and conferring/consulting skills as the two key competencies required for teaching SED/BD students.

Moreover, teachers may also require training in other areas in order to adequately serve students with severe emotional and behavioral disorders. Ruhl and Hughes (1985) stated that teachers serving emotionally handicapped students were frequently confronted by aggressive behavior, both verbal and physical, and found a significant relationship between the amount of training teachers' received in dealing with classroom aggression and their level of confidence in dealing with such situations. Ruhl and Hughes concluded that there was a need for teachers of

students with emotional handicaps to receive preservice training in both preventative and intervention strategies to cope with student aggression. In addition, Epstein, Foley, and Cullinan (1992) indicated that counselors were used in many educational programs for adolescents with serious emotional disturbances. The authors noted that many teachers do not have access to counselors and suggested "the special education teacher may need training in the use of counseling techniques to supplement teaching skills" (p. 208).

Despite research on the competencies needed by teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders, it is difficult to ascertain whether preservice training is adequately preparing these teachers for the tasks and situations they face in classrooms today. A survey of practicing teachers of students with emotional disturbances reported that just over one-half (54.2%) of the respondents rated the conventional 4 year teacher training program as being "adequate" for teaching SED/BD students in a public school program (Lutkemeir, 1983).

Currently, as was the case with Lutkemeir's research a decade ago, little is known about the actual demands and activities SED/BD teachers routinely perform in classrooms or the importance they place upon these tasks. According to Zabel (1988), it is unclear to what degree specific competencies are actually

being taught in teacher preparation programs and whether these competencies continue to be used by practitioners in the classroom. In particular Zabel stated, "Research on the skills that teachers actually use and how they correspond with their training could provide helpful information to teacher educators" (p. 189-190).

Gable et al.'s (1992) investigation attempts to answer Zabel's foregoing concerns. Teachers of students with serious emotional and behavioral disorders and university teacher educators were surveyed to determine the actual tasks performed by SED/BD teachers, their perceptions of the importance of these tasks, and the adequacy of training received to perform them. Teacher competencies were divided into six major areas: assessment of student behavior, preparation and planning, instruction and teaching, behavior management, conferring and consulting, and other tasks/administrative responsibilities. Both teachers and teacher educators rated all competency clusters, with the exception of other tasks/administrative responsibilities, as important to very important, with behavior management and conferring/consulting skills the most important. Teachers felt well prepared in the areas of assessment, planning, and behavior management, and least prepared in conferring/consulting and administrative tasks. Furthermore, teacher perceptions were affected by total years of teaching experience, wherein

less experienced teachers (5 or less years total teaching experience): 1) spent greater amounts of time in preparation and less time consulting/conferring than more experienced teachers, 2) rated instruction and teaching competencies more important than did more experienced teachers, and 3) reported being better trained in preparation/planning, teaching/instruction, and administrative tasks than more experienced teachers.

Since teaching students with severe emotional disturbances is a relatively new field, additional research in teacher competencies is of particular interest to SED/BD teachers and teacher educators alike. What skills do teachers of seriously emotionally disturbed and behaviorally disordered students use and believe to be important in the ongoing performance of their professional duties? What effect does the number of years teaching SED/BD students have on the perceived importance of basic work-related competencies and does this corroborate Gable et al.'s recent findings? How well do SED/BD teachers feel they are being prepared to perform these tasks? Is transdisciplinary planning a critical aspect of an SED teacher's role? Are transdisciplinary teams in place and are teachers included as team members?

The purpose of the present study was to look more closely at these issues. Using the instrument employed by Gable et al. (1992), SED/BD teachers were surveyed to determine the amount of time, level of importance, and perceived adequacy of training received on 20 teacher competencies in six major task areas. In addition, follow-up interviews were conducted with over 40% of the survey respondents to see if additional information might be obtained regarding the teachers' actual practices, feelings, and needs in their respective classrooms.

Method

Subjects

The participants in this study were teachers of students with serious emotional disturbances who taught in district and county public schools in the preservice area served by San Jose State University, San Jose, California.

Nineteen (45%) of the contacted teachers completed and returned their surveys. One of the questionnaires was incomplete and was therefore excluded from the data analysis. Consequently, 18 teacher questionnaires were used in the final analysis. Nine of these teachers (50%) taught at the elementary school level, three (17%) taught middle school, and six (33%) taught high school. Ten (56%) of the sample polled taught in suburban schools, seven (38%) in urban, and one

(6%) in a rural school setting. All 18 of the teachers reported that their classrooms were self-contained. Similarly, all 18 of the teachers classified their students as having serious emotional disturbances (SED). Fourteen teachers had six or more years of overall teaching experience, and 10 had six or more years experience in teaching special education. Eight of the teachers had at least a Master's degree.

Instruments

Survey instrument. The survey instrument used in this study was initially developed and used by Gable et al. (1992). Twenty teacher competencies were divided into six general categories: assessment of student behavior, preparation and planning, instruction and teaching, behavior management, post-instruction and administrative tasks, and conferring and consulting. Teachers were asked to provide general demographic information about their teaching experience and estimate the approximate number of hours per week they spent performing each teaching task/competency. Teachers used a 4-point Likert-type scale to rate both the relative importance of each competency and the adequacy of training they received in each competency area.

Interview instrument. An interview protocol designed by the authors was used to conduct follow-up interviews with several of the teachers who responded

to the survey. Information was solicited in seven areas, including general class demographics and teaching experience, program description, curriculum development and presentation, behavior management and training, special-regular education collaboration and mainstreaming, and relationships with professionals and families outside the school facility (see Appendix). Each interview was tape-recorded and later transcribed into a written format. The information obtained in the individual interviews was consolidated into a matrix to allow the examination of teacher responses across each of the seven general areas of interest.

Procedure

A presentation outlining the purposes and procedures of the study was made at a county meeting of special education directors. Packets of information, which included cover letters, copies of the survey instrument, and return envelopes, were distributed to those directors who expressed interest. They contacted their SED teachers, who were given the option of participating in the study. Approximately 4 weeks later, one of the authors made follow-up phone calls to special education directors and SED teachers, and additional surveys were mailed to those individuals requesting them.

In order to schedule follow-up interviews with survey respondents, special education directors were once again contacted. Teachers from different grade levels, as well as both district and county schools, were subsequently interviewed. All interviews were conducted at the school site, tape recorded, and took approximately 1 hour to complete.

Results

Survey Results

Data analysis of survey results focused on two main variables: the teachers' ratings of the relative importance of the twenty competencies, and the teachers' ratings of the quality of training that they received in preparation to deal with each of the competencies. Both variables were measured utilizing a 4-point Likert-type scale. Table 1 displays mean and standard deviations for each of the twenty competencies for both importance and training ratings. In addition

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Insert Table 1 about here

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to presenting descriptive statistics for the individual competencies, Table 1 also lists means and standard deviations for six competency areas, which were formulated based on a theoretical clustering of the individual competencies.

The mean importance ratings for the competencies ranged from 2.56 to 4.00, indicating that the teachers felt that all of the items were of at least moderate importance. All 18 teachers accorded the "Counsel with Students" item with the highest possible importance rating. The training ratings tended to be somewhat lower than the importance ratings, with means ranging from 2.33 to 3.22.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the group mean importance ratings, revealing a significant difference between the six competency clusters ($F(5,102) = 4.41$, $p = .001$). A Scheffe post-hoc comparison was subsequently utilized to analyze the exact nature of the differences between the groups. The Scheffe test revealed that Group D, Behavior Management, had a mean that was significantly higher than the other five groups. Restated, the teachers rated the items in the Behavior Management cluster as significantly more important than the items in the other clusters. (This finding did not suggest that the items in the other clusters were not rated as important, it merely revealed that the Behavior Management groups' ratings were relatively higher than the other

groups). A second ANOVA was performed upon the level of training variable, but no significant differences were found between the six groups ($F(5,102) = 0.64$).

A secondary aim of the analysis was to examine the teachers' responses based on demographic variables to investigate the possibility of differences in the six competency clusters. When the teachers were separated into two groups based on the number of years of teaching experience, two significant differences were found (See Table 2). Teachers that had six or more

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Insert Table 2 about here

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years of experience rated preparation and planning as more important than did the newer teachers ($t(16) = 2.55$, $p=.02$). More experienced teachers rated instruction and teaching as more important than did newer teachers ($t(16) = 2.84$, $p=.01$). No differences were found between the newer and more experienced teachers in terms of training ratings.

An examination of teacher response based on years of special education experience revealed that teachers with more than six years in special education

rated instruction and teaching as more important than did the teachers newer to special education ($t(16) = 2.19$, $p=.04$) (See table 3). Teachers with less special

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Insert Table 3 about here

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education experience stated they had better training in both preparation and planning ($t(16) = 2.16$, $p=.04$) and behavior management ($t(16) = 2.19$, $p=.04$).

Finally, when teachers were separated by degree, it was found that teachers with at least Master's degrees rated instruction and teaching as more important ($t(16) = 2.64$, $p=.02$) than did teachers with Bachelor's degrees (see table 4).

Insert Table 4 about here

Interview Results

Interviews were conducted with 8 (42%) of the teachers who completed and returned surveys. Teachers from 4 district and 4 county schools were interviewed: three of these teachers (38%) taught at the elementary school level,

three (38%) taught middle school, and two (25%) taught high school. Two of the county school classes were comprised of students who lived in residential facilities (an elementary level class on-grounds at the facility and a middle level class on a public school campus), one county middle school class was a therapeutic day treatment program for students who lived at home but whose families were engaged in intensive on-going therapy, and one county high school class was comprised of students who lived in group homes.

The data obtained in the individual interviews was analyzed to determine if there were similarities in teacher response across the seven different areas as well as to note any unique perspectives or comments.

Class Demographics. Class size ranged from 5 to 11 students; the mean number of students per class was 9.25. The range and type of behaviors present in the classes were similar, with teachers frequently used terms such as "aggressive", "oppositional", "paranoid", "manipulative", "acting out", and "schizo" to describe their students. All classes were composed of a mix of students new and old to special education.

Program Description. To varying degrees, teachers reported having academic, social/emotional, and behavioral components in their program. All

classes were structured around academics, however the primary focus and concern in each class was dealing with the students' emotional and behavioral problems as they arose. Academics was generally the vehicle in which to model/teach appropriate behaviors, social skills, and coping mechanisms, but as one teacher put it, "academics and affective areas overlap, are one and the same."

The formal therapeutic component in the classes ranged from 1/2 hour weekly counseling sessions with social workers, to day treatment programs, to classes in residential facilities where there was no formal therapy in the classroom, but where school behavior and work was a key part of the students' overall therapeutic program. Accordingly, all of the teachers indicated they used counseling skills and techniques with their students on an on-going basis to help students cope with and resolve feelings and situations that occurred throughout the school day.

Teacher goals for students fell into two broad categories: to teach and/or help the students maintain self-control, and to ready students for success in the mainstream, future placements, and society in general. Particularly with the county classes, there was an expressed awareness of the transitory nature of the students'

placement, and a concern with providing the students with the emotional and behavioral skills necessary for the future.

Curriculum Development. There was a vast range in the degree to which the academic content offered in the SED classroom was aligned with the regular education core curriculum. While all teachers expressed a concern with providing SED students with the core curriculum as much as possible, the students' academic, emotional, and vocational needs, as well as the availability of adequate curricular materials, generally dictated the actual material the students were exposed to. At one extreme the SED teacher and regular education teachers co-planned the curriculum, so all students were exposed to the same content. At the other extreme was a county high school class where the curriculum was reportedly not closely aligned with the district or state framework. The students gained academic credit in classes with the same titles, but different content than the regular education students.

A wide range of instructional materials and methodologies were present in all SED classes. Regular education textbooks and materials were used by many teachers when they were available and appropriate to the academic level of the students. Materials designed specifically for special education students were also

used frequently. In general, below grade level texts and materials were used because students were often functioning below grade level academically. Furthermore, teachers made modifications to instructional materials and work requirements, including shorter assignments and longer periods in which to finish the work, re-writing portions of textbooks, and xeroxing materials in larger print to make it more readable.

The instructional methodologies used by the teachers were very similar. All teachers relied primarily upon direct instruction. Only one teacher used cooperative learning, and none incorporated discovery learning in their instruction. Most teachers utilized a combination of whole group, small group, and individualized instruction in the classroom, with math, reading and writing frequently taught individually or in small groups by ability, while science, social studies, and PE were taught in whole groups.

The focus of instruction in the SED classrooms generally included both traditional academic/content areas (math, language arts, science, social studies) and some type of formal instruction in or attention to affective areas such as social skills, interpersonal behaviors, and feelings. Two teachers reported starting the school year with a formal unit on social skills, which included topics such as

aggressive, assertive, and passive behaviors, self-care and hygiene, and self-esteem. Vocational, transitional, and interpersonal skills, such as asking someone out on a date, were focal areas mentioned by middle and high school teachers. Formal instruction in the affective areas was generally achieved through group discussion and role playing of new social skills and behaviors.

The Individual Educational Plan (IEP) was used to varying degrees for curriculum development in the SED classroom. In general, IEPs were referred to to obtain an overall sense of student academic levels and social/emotional needs. All teachers recognized that students were placed in the SED classroom because of social/emotional and behavioral, rather than academic, needs, and the goals for academic achievement were generally to maintain or increase grade level in content areas. Only two teachers utilized the IEP to group students and develop curricular units which addressed specific academic needs. Many teachers, particularly in county school classes, used the IEP to focus on student transitions in order to accent the skills needed to be successful in future placements.

Behavior Management. When asked about student behaviors that were the most difficult to deal with, all teachers commented on oppositional, aggressive, and acting-out behaviors. Several teachers said there were other student behaviors

which they personally found to be very difficult to deal with, such as whining, complaining, and "crazymaking". The teachers mentioned that the students attempted to "hook" them into power struggles, thus gaining the "upper hand" in the classroom.

Behavior management systems that relied on behavior modification techniques were employed by all teachers. Reliance on positive reinforcement, including verbal praise, smiles, hugs, and rewards, was universal. All teachers in the study said timeouts, initiated by either the teacher or student, were frequently used in the classroom. Token economy systems, where students earned points or tokens which could be redeemed later for rewards, were used by five of the eight teachers. All of the teachers said they used some form of behavioral contracting with individual students when it was appropriate. When asked about the behavior management techniques which were the most and least successful, all of the teachers agreed that the use of positive reinforcement was most important. However, in general, they were unable to pinpoint the least successful, because if a particular technique did not work it was quickly discarded and something else implemented.

All of the teachers were familiar with a level systems approach to modify behavior in the classroom. (A level system is a systematic response cost approach wherein students progress systematically from one level to another according to prescribed indices developed by the teacher). The level system approach was only utilized in two county school classes in which the students all lived in residential facilities; school behavior was an integral aspect of the level system used in the residential facility. Two of the other teachers interviewed did not feel level systems worked well with SED students, because the students often acted out when they lost a level, or would sabotage their own progress so they would not move up a level.

Teachers received training in behavior management from a variety of places. Credential and Masters degree programs at universities were mentioned, as were county and district inservices. Additionally, all teachers learned a great deal on the job, through trial and error, as well as from observing and consulting with other professionals in the field.

The amount of training teachers had in dealing with assaultive behaviors varied greatly. Several of the teachers had received some formal training. One new teacher expressed an interest, however, she had not yet received any training

in counteracting assaults perpetrated by SED students. Another experienced teacher had requested training but the request was denied because the district was reportedly concerned about liability issues. All teachers said they physically restrain their students as little as possible. However, there was a common belief that training in this area was important in order to provide teachers with both the skills and confidence necessary to prevent and intervene when assaultive behaviors occurred in SED classrooms.

Special-Regular Education Collaboration and Mainstreaming. The amount and type of contact, interaction, and collaboration between regular and special education at the school sites was variable. Most of the teachers said they felt very supported and welcomed by the regular education staff. However, relationships generally had to be initiated, nurtured, and maintained by the SED teachers.

Seven of the eight teachers indicated they received a great deal of support from both the regular education staff and administration at the school in their attempts to mainstream SED students and in dealing with any problems that occurred in either the SED or mainstream classroom. All of the teachers said they were very careful about "handpicking" regular education classes and teachers

which they thought would be accepting of the SED students. Several had agreements with the regular education teachers about returning students immediately if trouble was eminent.

Relationships Outside the School Facility. The amount of contact with students' families depended upon where the student resided. Daily contact was made with the caretakers of students living and going to school in residential programs. For other students, in both district and county schools, teachers tried to make phone contact with the students' family or guardians at least once a week. None of the teachers interviewed used newsletters to communicate with parents, however, two of the teachers conducted home visits and two had parent support groups. Developing good relationships and having good communication with parents and guardians was reportedly a vital key to working effectively with SED students.

The types and amount of involvement SED teachers had with other agencies, such as mental health, social services, and juvenile authorities, varied greatly. Students who lived in residential facilities or foster homes had either a social worker or county mental health worker, and communication with these agencies was initiated when necessary. Elementary school students were generally

not involved with the juvenile court system; contact with this agency was more common for middle and high school teachers. All teachers stated the need for good communication and exchange of information between themselves and everyone involved with the students, whether they were parents, guardians, or outside agencies. The teachers were all aware of who the key people were in their students' lives, and contacted them when the need arose. However, with the exception of IEP meetings, when everyone providing services to the student met, contact with the agencies was generally made on an as-needed, rather than on-going basis. This approach was usually successful in resolving the immediate problem. For instance, one teacher commented "If I'm having a really hard time with a group home and I feel like the kid's not getting what he should, I'll call the social worker and oftentimes the social worker takes care of it really quick..." However, teachers felt more ongoing communication with the agencies involved in their students' lives would better serve their students. According to one teacher, "If we had one day a month when all the agencies involved with my kids sat down and talked -- wouldn't that be fantastic? Yes, it's ideal, but it's not going to happen...they're so short-handed, we're short-handed...we're each working with a piece of the kid instead of the whole kid, and that's not good."

Miscellaneous. Although all the SED teachers interviewed were familiar with the special education personnel at their school or facility, the degree to which they received support from them varied depending upon the location and type of class. Teachers of county school classes located on district school campuses received most of their support from County Office of Education special education personnel. However, county school teachers at non-public school sites received support from the private agency where the class was located and generally had very little contact with county special education personnel. SED teachers from district classes frequently mentioned the school psychologists as their key support person. District school psychologists often acted as the case carrier, diagnosing and assisting with appropriate placement of SED students. Moreover, they were viable classroom consultants, providing behavioral intervention assistance, as well as curricular enhancement. The teachers were generally satisfied with the level of support they received from special education personnel associated with their respective programs.

Teachers pointed out that if a student was absent from school a phone call was made the same day to the student's guardian, social worker, group home, or residential facility. Several teachers said if the student could be located, someone

would pick the student up and bring him/her to school. In general, if students did not get to school regularly, and the problem could not be corrected by the teacher working in concert with the student and guardians, students were often moved to another, more restrictive, educational setting. The teachers indicated that the School Attendance Review Board (SARB) was not actively involved in any truancy or attendance problems related to their students.

Open Ended Question. The final interview question was open-ended, giving teachers an opportunity to reflect upon any issues, concerns, or thoughts they had not addressed. The majority of the teachers' responses fell into two general areas: teacher training and characteristics of successful SED teachers.

There was a great deal of discussion about preservice and inservice training. More specifically, teachers were concerned about the balance needed between training in behavior management and preparing relevant curriculum. One teacher thought the behavior management training received in her credential program for students with severe disabilities was helpful because of the focus on task analysis and redirecting students. Conversely, another teacher found it to be of limited use, because it did not train her to deal with aggressive, acting-out students. Several teachers felt they were inadequately trained in curriculum and

instruction. Many mentioned the need for training in counseling skills and dealing with emotional crises. However, none of the teachers seemed to know what types of training would adequately prepare a teacher for the volatile nature of most SED classrooms. The general consensus was that it was inordinately difficult to prepare SED teachers because the intricacies of the job were learned primarily through on-the-job training, dealing with and learning from situations as they occurred.

Virtually all of the teachers talked about personal characteristics and coping skills deemed important for teachers of SED students. Being comfortable with oneself, not taking things personally, and being able to separate emotionally from the students and school environment were frequently mentioned, as were flexibility, spontaneity, and being in control of one's own emotions. Having a sense of humor, being able to communicate with and respect other people, and staying calm were also critical attitudes.

Discussion

Analysis of the surveys indicated that SED teachers considered all of the teaching competencies listed to be of at least moderate importance, with behavioral management skills rated the most important. This finding is in concert with the results of a number of other studies (Gable et al., 1992; Joyce & Wienke, 1989;

Zabel, 1988). Teacher perceptions regarding the importance of several competencies appeared to be affected by years of teaching experience and level of training. Less experienced SED teachers reported feeling better trained in preparation/planning and behavior management than the more experienced teachers. Additionally, more experienced SED teachers rated instruction/teaching and preparation/planning competencies as more important than less experienced teachers; this finding contraindicates results reported by Gable et al. (1992).

Whether these results indicate that newer teachers are receiving better training in behavior management and preparation/planning, or that these areas are of greater concern to newer teachers, is not clear from the data analysis. However, the information obtained in the follow-up interviews with teachers supplemented, and in some cases, clarified the quantitative data obtained from the survey questionnaires. It became apparent that regardless of amount of teaching experience or level of training, the teachers' primary concern and focus in the classroom was dealing with students' day-to-day emotional and behavioral problems. Likewise, the need to provide SED/BD students with the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully function in other, less restrictive settings was paramount. Additionally, despite what the surveys indicated, in actual practice

teaching basic skills and academic content seemed to be secondary to helping SED/BD students gain emotional and behavioral control in the classroom. The expressed hope seemed to be that after gaining such control, SED/BD students could participate in mainstream academic educational settings. In light of these findings, it is interesting to note that teachers rated their training in "teaching other skills" to be the lowest of any of the competencies in the instruction and teaching category (see Table 1).

The survey and interview results both indicated that behavior management is a major area of concern for SED teachers. Essentially all of the interviewed teachers mentioned using counseling skills on an on-going basis in the classroom. The "counsel with students" item was the only competency which received the highest rating on the survey by all teachers, however, in general they did not report feeling highly satisfied with the training received in counseling students. It may be, as indicated by Epstein, et al. (1992), that in order to adequately work with SED students, special education teachers need more training in counseling techniques.

The "intervene - severe behavior" item received a very high mean importance rating on the survey (see Table 1). All of the teachers interviewed also voiced concerns about the need for training in this area, as well as the adequacy (or

inadequacy) of the training they received in handling student aggression in the classroom. Teachers who had training in this area expressed greater levels of confidence in their ability to cope with or prevent incidents of student aggression. In the interviews, teachers indicated that dealing with aggressive behavior should be a preservice and inservice component. This corroborates Ruhl and Hughes' (1985) finding that there is a need for preservice training in preventative and intervention strategies to deal with student aggression.

The coordination of services and exchange of information is an important function of professionals who are working with SED students (Huntze, 1988). It was evident from information obtained in the interviews that in the course of performing their jobs, the teachers were in contact with many individuals, including but not limited to other teachers, parents, social workers, counselors, physicians, and probation officers. Thus, it was no surprise to find that, despite the number of years teaching, special education experience, and academic degree, teachers consistently ranked conferring and consulting skills as among the three most important sets of teaching competencies on the survey. Interestingly, this was also the area in which the teachers reported receiving the lowest level of training.

These findings verified Gable et al.'s study (1992), wherein teachers reported feeling the least prepared in the area of conferring/consulting.

It appears that although SED students receive assistance from a number of service agencies, the SED/BD teacher is not being adequately trained in the necessary skills to work with other professionals serving these students. Instead, preservice training generally focuses on curriculum methods and modifications, and behavior management techniques. It does not address the many essential collaborative and teamwork skills needed by SED/BD teachers to participate as a transdisciplinary team member. Although the interviewed teachers understood the roles of the agencies interfacing with their students, agency contacts were on an as-needed basis in order to resolve problems, rather than as part of an on-going, established process whereby teachers and service agencies communicated and collaborated to minimize and prevent the conflict. According to Huntze (1988), a cooperative interface between the public school and other service agencies is important if the SED/BD student is to remain in or become able to benefit from school, or to function in a post-school environment. Since the ability to cooperate and collaborate with different professionals and agencies appears to be an important function of SED teachers, understanding the inner workings of

transdisciplinary teams, as well as specific coursework in consultation skills, might be a useful addition to preservice and inservice programs.

Consequently, the authors of the current study contend SED teacher training can be conducted in the field, using a service delivery model whereby professionals from different areas meet and exchange information and ideas at a district location. This realistic interchange would model the actual conferring and consulting processes inherent in a transdisciplinary approach. As a result, preservice training becomes a "real" application of theory and practice, preparing teachers to meet the demands of serving the needs of students with serious emotional disturbances.

The current investigation also showed that more emphasis should be placed on preservice training to increase counseling skills of SED teachers. At this time, training to be an SED teacher is an educational process, not a clinical one. However, teachers consistently discussed the extreme nature of their students' emotional difficulties, often using descriptors that are common in the mental health field (i.e., schizophrenic, manic, compulsive, depressed) to describe the children and adolescents in their classes. Many of the teachers indicated they felt unprepared to deal with the severity of their students' behavioral and emotional

problems. Thus, preservice and inservice training should make every attempt to address these real and urgent concerns. It may be that preservice training for future teachers of students with serious emotional disorders should be interdisciplinary, with instruction provided in departments of special education, school counseling, psychology (emphasis on clinical and social), social work, and/or rehabilitation counseling. Inservice training at the district level might include an in-depth analysis of case studies requiring practitioners to investigate educational and clinical applications to solve real or hypothetical problems. Additionally, a staff development process which provides training in the use of advanced counseling techniques would allow teachers to enhance their counseling skills.

The exigencies of teaching students with serious emotional disturbances and behavioral disorders seem to warrant constant appraisal and reappraisal of preservice preparation. If the ultimate goal is to provide the best match possible between preservice preparation and the actual professional needs of SED/BD teachers, teacher training programs may have to rethink where and how to deliver the curriculum. Perhaps teaching collaboratively in the field whereby professionals

share expertise along with prospective teachers will emerge as a new training model.

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Appendix

Interview Protocol

1. Class Demographics
   A. Total number of students, boys, girls
   B. Types of disabilities present, exhibiting behaviors, etc.
   C. Number of years students have been in special education
2. Program Description
   A. Major components of program
   B. Focus of program: academic, therapeutic, combination
   C. Philosophies/thoughts on education of SED students
   D. Personal goals for education of their students
3. Curriculum Development
   A. Degree of alignment with regular education core curriculum
   B. Materials used: regular education textbooks and/or materials, modified materials, types of modification
   C. Instructional methodologies: independent, small group, whole group instruction, contracts, individualized instruction, etc.

D. Focus of Instruction: content (language, math, science, social studies) or affective areas (social/interpersonal, vocational, transitional, etc.)

E. Use of Individual Education Plans (IEP) in development of curriculum

4. Behavior Management

A. Most difficult student behaviors to deal with

B. Types of behavior management used in classroom

C. Most and least successful behavior management techniques

D. Familiarity with and use of level system in classroom

E. Behavior management training, if any

F. Assaultive behavior training, if any

5. Special-Regular Education Collaboration and Mainstreaming

A. Amount and types of contact, interaction, and collaboration between regular and special education teachers at school site

B. Amount and type of support received from regular education staff in attempts to mainstream SED students

C. Types of classes SED students are mainstreamed into

6. Relationships Outside the School Facility
   A. Quality of relationships and amount/type of contact with students' families
   B. Types of services provided for families (ex: inservices, parent training, support groups)
   C. Types of relationships or involvement with other agencies (ex: mental health, social services, group homes or residential facilities, juvenile authorities)
7. Miscellaneous
   A. Familiarity and contact with special education personnel at facility (ex: school psychologist, director of special education); types and amount of support received
   B. Familiarity with and use of School Attendance Review Board (SARB) as a means of dealing with student truancy; past or present student involvement with SARB
   C. Any other problems, concerns, thoughts not addressed

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Teacher Responses on Individual Items

Task/Competency	Importance (1=low, 4=high) Mean (SD)	Training (1=low, 4=high) Mean (SD)
A. Assess Student Behavior		
1. Administer Norm Referenced	3.11	2.83
	(1.18)	(1.10)
2. Administer CRT	2.56	2.50
	(1.29)	(1.34)
3. Develop CRT	2.56	2.33
	(1.34)	(1.41)
4. Monitor Student Progress	3.28	3.22
	(1.32)	(1.06)
5. Write IEP Goals/Objectives	3.89	3.11
	(0.32)	(1.08)
Total - Group A	3.08	2.80
	(1.24)	(1.23)
B. Preparation and Planning		
6. Write Instructional Plans	3.22	3.17
	(0.88)	(1.04)
7. Prepare Materials	3.72	3.00
	(0.57)	(1.03)

(table continues)

Task/Competency	Importance (1=low, 4=high) Mean (SD)	Training (1=low, 4=high) Mean (SD)
8. Arrange Physical Space	3.06	2.72
	(0.73)	(0.89)
Total - Group B	3.33	2.96
	(0.78)	(0.99)
C. Instruction and Teaching		
9. Teach Basic Skills	3.61	3.06
	(0.61)	(1.06)
10. Teach Other Skills	3.67	2.61
	(0.59)	(0.98)
11. Monitor Activities	3.39	2.83
	(0.70)	(0.92)
12. Use Mediated Activities	3.06	2.72
	(1.11)	(0.89)
Total - Group C	3.43	2.81
	(0.80)	(0.96)
D. Behavior Management		
13. Write Behavioral Plans	3.72	2.94
	(0.75)	(1.06)
14. Monitor Interventions	3.89	2.72
	(0.32)	(0.89)

(table continues)

Task/Competency	Importance (1=low, 4=high) Mean (SD)	Training (1=low, 4=high) Mean (SD)
15. Intervene - Severe Behavior	3.83	2.44
	(0.51)	(0.98)
16. Counsel with Students	4.00	2.67
	(0.00)	(1.08)
Total - Group D	3.86	2.69
	(0.48)	(1.00)
E. Post-Instruction		
17. Revise Instructional Plan	3.50	2.94
	(0.71)	(1.00)
18. Administrative Requests	2.94	2.39
	(1.16)	(1.33)
Total - Group E	3.22	2.67
	(0.99)	(1.20)
F. Conferring/Consulting		
19. With School Personnel	3.61	2.33
	(0.50)	(1.23)
20. With Parents	3.72	2.56
	(0.57)	(1.10)
Total - Group F	3.67	2.44
	(0.53)	(1.15)

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Importance and Training, with Teachers Separated by Numbers of Years of Teaching Experience

		Total Import N=18	0-5 Yrs Tchg N=4	6+ Yrs Tchg N=14	Total Training N=18	0-5 Yrs Tchg N=4	6+ Yrs Tchg N=14
A. Assess Student Behavior	X	3.08	3.05	3.09	2.80	3.10	2.71
	SD	1.24	1.23	1.25	1.23	1.17	1.24
B. Preparation and Planning	X	3.33	2.83*	3.48*	2.96	3.25	2.88
	SD	0.78	0.72	0.74	0.99	0.75	1.04
C. Instruction and Teaching	X	3.43	2.81**	3.61**	2.81	3.06	2.73
	SD	0.80	0.54	0.78	0.96	0.85	0.98
D. Behavior Management	X	3.86	3.94	3.84	2.69	3.00	2.61
	SD	0.48	0.25	0.53	1.00	0.89	1.02
E. Post-Instruction	X	3.22	3.00	3.29	2.67	3.25	2.50
	SD	0.99	0.76	1.05	1.20	0.71	1.26
F. Conferring/Consulting	X	3.67	3.88	3.61	2.44	1.75	2.64
	SD	0.53	0.35	0.57	1.15	1.41	1.06

* $p = .02$

** $p = .01$

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Importance and Training, with Teachers Separated by Numbers of Years in Special Education

		Total Import N=18	0-5 Yrs Sp Ed N=8	6+ Yrs Sp Ed N=10	Total Training N=18	0-5 Yrs Sp Ed N=8	6+ Yrs Sp Ed N=10
A. Assess Student Behavior	X	3.08	3.00	3.14	2.80	2.98	2.66
	SD	1.24	1.38	1.13	1.23	1.37	1.10
B. Preparation and Planning	X	3.33	3.13	3.50	2.96	3.42*	2.60*
	SD	0.78	0.80	0.73	0.99	0.65	1.07
C. Instruction and Teaching	X	3.43	3.13*	3.68*	2.81	3.19	2.50
	SD	0.80	0.94	0.57	0.96	0.82	0.96
D. Behavior Management	X	3.86	3.78	3.93	2.69	3.16*	2.33*
	SD	0.48	0.66	0.27	1.00	0.85	0.97
E. Post-Instruction	X	3.22	3.06	3.35	2.67	3.06	2.35
	SD	0.99	1.12	0.88	1.20	1.34	0.99
F. Conferring/Consulting	X	3.67	3.69	3.65	2.44	2.94	2.05
	SD	0.53	0.48	0.59	1.15	1.34	0.83

* $p = .04$

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for Importance and Training, with Teachers Separated by Academic Degree

		Total Import Rating N=18	BA Import N=10	MA+ Import N=8	Total Training Rating N=18	BA Training N=10	MA+ Training N=8
A. Assess Student Behavior	X	3.08	3.12	3.03	2.80	2.86	2.73
	SD	1.24	1.30	1.17	1.23	1.23	1.24
B. Preparation and Planning	X	3.33	3.30	3.38	2.96	3.13	2.75
	SD	0.78	0.75	0.82	0.99	0.94	1.03
C. Instruction and Teaching	X	3.43	3.15*	3.78*	2.81	2.88	2.72
	SD	0.80	0.89	0.49	0.96	1.02	0.89
D. Behavior Management	X	3.86	3.85	3.88	2.69	2.93	2.41
	SD	0.48	0.53	0.42	1.00	0.94	1.01
E. Post-Instruction	X	3.22	3.00	3.50	2.67	2.85	2.44
	SD	0.99	1.08	0.82	1.20	1.18	1.21
F. Conferring/Consulting	X	3.67	3.60	3.75	2.44	2.65	2.19
	SD	0.53	0.50	0.58	1.15	1.18	1.11

* $p = .02$